

**Remarks Prepared for
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Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration
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On behalf of President Bush and Transportation Secretary Norm Mineta, I want to thank you for the opportunity to speak here today. It's always a pleasure to be here among you. I'm particularly happy to be joined again this year by my colleague Dr. Runge.

I want to congratulate all of you on the job you've done throughout the past year to help reduce the number of deaths, injuries and crashes on our Nation's roads and highways. Your dedication and hard work exemplify the excellence we ALL strive to achieve in our highway safety programs.

It's an exciting time for us right now as we look forward to the landmark reauthorization of the federal surface transportation program. While today we're focused primarily on safety, getting the economy moving has always been, and remains, a top priority for the President and his entire team.

These goals are more than just compatible. A safe, efficient transportation system and a productive economy go hand in hand. After all, safe transportation MOVES our Nation's economy. And your efforts are yielding very encouraging results in keeping those trucks running safely and efficiently.

America's economy is strong and getting stronger. More than 365,000 jobs have been added in the last 5 months, and the second half of 2003 saw the highest economic growth in almost 20 years. And one thing that has always been constant in productive times is an efficient transportation system — in particular, a healthy trucking sector.

The U.S. transportation system annually carries more than 15 billion tons of freight — valued at over \$9 trillion. That's impressive. But even more impressive is where we are headed. Freight volume is forecasted to TRIPLE by 2020. So we need to prepare.

Recognizing this lynchpin to our economy, the Bush Administration has placed significant emphasis on facilitating freight and goods movement, from port to portal, across the national transportation network.

Your role in maintaining the safety, security and efficiency of that network is obvious. But in addition to saving lives, it helps to feed the economic growth that ultimately provides all of us with better resources for doing our jobs. By working together we can improve transportation and safety and build a healthy and sustainable economy.

Safety IS at the very heart of our mission at the U.S. Department of Transportation and Federal Motor Carrier Safety (FMCSA). And President Bush and this Administration are committed to fostering the safest, most secure national transportation system possible. We are not willing to accept what has become far too commonplace — people dying on our roads every day.

Under Secretary Mineta's leadership, we are taking new approaches, finding new solutions, and working with our valued partners, to achieve a higher level of safety and security for all Americans.

The FMCSA is committed to achieving the U.S. Department of Transportation's highway safety goal — reducing the fatality rate in all motor vehicle crashes by 41 percent from 1996 to 2008. As part of the overall departmental safety goal, FMCSA's aim is to reduce commercial vehicle crash fatalities to 1.65 fatalities per 100 million miles of truck travel.

We believe our partnership with the state police and highway patrol forces is critical toward this end. Together, we have made important progress toward meeting our goal.

Nationally, large truck-related fatalities have decreased 5 years in a row. In fact, in 2002 the decrease was 4.2 percent — the largest in a decade. These results are due to your outstanding efforts. But even with this improvement, we know more must be done. Working together, we can further reduce large truck fatalities and crashes.

I'm here today to talk specifically about that partnership and our State programs. Before I do, I want to give you an update on our highest-priority Federal initiative — reauthorization of the surface transportation program.

Last year, the President transmitted to Congress the Department of Transportation's proposal. The Bush Administration's new surface transportation reauthorization bill — known as the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act, or SAFETEA — will give you additional tools to do your job.

The bill provides new focus on safety and doubles the investment in safety programs. It would fund our Nation's transportation priorities without raising gas taxes, without increasing the Federal deficit, and without taking money from other important programs.

The President is insisting on a fiscally responsible bill. He's prepared to veto any transportation proposal that would dampen the opportunity for lasting economic growth by raising gas taxes or adding to the deficit. This is just one example of the important initiatives waiting for congressional action.

As you know, we are presently operating under yet another temporary extension of TEA-21. Just last Sunday, President Bush signed a 60-day extension for our current program. Congress basically has until the end of April to pass a multi-year bill that the President finds acceptable. The extension allows us to continue our operations with funding prorated at FY '03 levels.

So, since we're all still open for business, let's look at the key programs and grants appropriated for FY '04. These are the federally supported tools that are so instrumental to your efforts to improve motor carrier safety.

The Motor Carrier Safety Assistance Program (MCSAP) remains the conduit of Federal funding and grant monies for motor carrier safety enforcement. MCSAP is the foundation for support of our commitment to commercial motor vehicle (CMV) safety — a commitment that is UNWAVERING.

MCSAP has been around for a while — 20 YEARS — and it will continue to be around. I think it's safe to say that MCSAP is, in a word, an institution. The program started in 1984, when the Federal government committed \$8 million to support the States' enforcement efforts. Funding has increased more than 20-fold since then, yielding major improvements in truck safety.

Over its two-decade life, MCSAP has evolved from an exclusively roadside inspection effort to a comprehensive, results-oriented enforcement program. More to the point, MCSAP has been the backbone of our efforts to standardize rules and inspection procedures. It ensures compatibility among the States, ending the "patchwork quilt" of regulatory schemes.

MCSAP grants support roadside driver and vehicle inspections, motor carrier compliance reviews, traffic and CDL enforcement, data improvements, and information and education efforts.

FMSCA is proud of this program, and proud of what you have achieved with it. It is the binding thread of our partnership to reduce CMV-related fatalities, injuries and crashes.

MCSAP funds currently are set at more than \$168 million for 2004. Again, this is part of the TEA-21 extension and is based on 2003 appropriations.

A key component of the 2004 program is our effort to prepare New Entrants to the motor carrier industry for safe and compliant operations. This is vitally important, considering an estimated 40,000 new carriers in the U.S. enter into service each year. This initiative establishes a process for assuring they are ready to do so with ample knowledge of safety regulations and procedures. We believe this year we have the resources to support 100 percent of your state's New Entrants program. I'll talk more about funding of this in a moment.

First, let's break down our FY '04 programs, starting with MCSAP. BASIC MCSAP funds of more than \$129.5 million is allocated to the States to continue the core components I just mentioned, plus commercial passenger carrier safety activities, HazMat training and enforcement, public awareness efforts, safety performance data collection, and compliance reviews.

We're providing Incentive funding of more than \$10.9 million for continuing progress in reducing CMV-involved crashes and fatalities. These are additional monies offered to States that improve their fatal crash performance.

High Priority funding of more than \$8.4 is allocated for national safety programs such as quality initiatives, judicial outreach, public education and outreach, HazMat safety, security and special research efforts, and innovative State-specific efforts that have the potential for nationwide implementation.

New Entrant Grant funding of \$16.9 million will support the States' implementation of the New Entrant Program. This provides you the resources for safety audits on carriers seeking new interstate operating authority. The Federal Highway Administration has committed an additional \$8 million to this program, bringing the total to nearly \$25 million.

Finally, FMSCA is committing more than \$2 million to continue our support for training and administration. These monies primarily provide training to State enforcement officers each year through the FMCSA National Training Center.

Next, let's look at Border Enforcement Grants. I realize these monies apply to just 14 States that border Canada and Mexico. But this is a vitally important effort to maintain safety and security on our highways and nationwide — especially in the atmosphere of heightened awareness following 9/11. A total of \$32 million is allocated for both Northern and Southern Border States. Twenty-three million is for border enforcement in the Southwestern States and \$9 million is for Northern States.

Grants for Commercial Drivers Licenses also are an essential safety tool for the States. In some cases, CDL testing as well as enforcement comes directly under your jurisdiction. Twenty-one million in funding for the State CDL Improvement program supports new and expanded safety and security initiatives. For example, the grants fund computer system modifications to improve the transmission of CDL driver conviction and disqualification data. All of you know how essential it is to receive this information in an accurate, complete and timely fashion. This is critical for officers to do their jobs effectively.

Also, we have revised the CDL skills test to improve efficiency and provide examiners with more flexibility in the specific tests they administer. The new procedures and manuals are currently being tested as a pilot project in Delaware, Indiana and New York through the end of April. Our timetable is to distribute the new exams and procedures by this September. The actual rulemaking process will begin then, so this will be voluntary by the States until the new regulations are finalized in 2006.

Another important enforcement tool is PRISM — The Performance and Registration Information Systems Management program. PRISM links Federal CMV safety information systems with State CMV registration and licensing systems. The program enables a State to determine the safety fitness of a motor carrier BEFORE issuing vehicle registrations. States may then deny, suspend or revoke the registration of a motor carrier or registrant that has been issued an out-of-service order by the Secretary. These Grants are funded at more than \$4.9 million for FY '04.

What's your role in PRISM? First, 32 States are implementing PRISM. Your State should be one of them. If it is not, I encourage you to ask your State DMV to join the program. Second, continue to encourage your personnel to use the most accurate violation code on citations.

PRISM works best when registration information is linked to the best, most accurate violation data.

PRISM is just one example of the key role of data. Good policy, good decision-making and good programs rely on good data. DOT is committed to working with our State partners to collect the very best crash, fatality and injury data available.

DOT put in place data quality guidelines 18 months ago, and we work hard to meet them. Many data correction requests come to FMCSA. But because States “own” the data, sometimes we are in the line of fire between States that provide the data, and carriers that dispute the data.

So FMCSA created the DataQs system to expedite the consideration and hopefully the resolution of data challenges. DataQs — the name comes from “data questions” — is an electronic means for filing concerns about Federal and State data released to the public by the agency.

DataQs provides a single, Web-based location for data challenge entry and response. The system forwards data concerns to the appropriate State records office for resolution, tracks data concerns through to resolution, and assists FMCSA and States in generating responses to the challengers.

DataQs does not require any changes in Federal or State procedures for resolving data challenges. It simplifies the existing process and provides a way for FMCSA, the States and the public to better track these data challenges. The system does not allow or require FMCSA intervention in the State data correction process.

Thirty-three States have enrolled in the free program. Your State should be enrolled. After you enroll, you’ll get a password into the Web-based system, and be ready to file, receive, and review data challenges. If your organization is the MCSAP agency, you need Data Qs. If your State’s MCSAP agency forwards data challenges to your organization for action, you need Data Qs. It will make your life easier. I’ll give an enrollment report to IACP staff so you can check your State’s status after this meeting.

Those are the details for FY ’04. For FY ’05, we don’t know exactly what will be authorized until Congress acts on SAFETEA. But I can spell out for you our goals and requests based on the President’s SAFETEA proposal.

In FY ’05 we’re putting increasing emphasis on traffic enforcement as a part of the CMV highway safety program. This includes enforcement of non-CMV’s and revision of inspection requirements during enforcement activities.

States would get reimbursed for CMV-related enforcement WITHOUT officers having to inspect the CMV. This would enable you to expand your CMV activities by utilizing personnel not specifically trained in CMV enforcement. And we’re encouraging action to be taken against motorists who show poor judgment and driving behavior that puts CMV’s and themselves at risk. We believe these changes will go a long way to improve highway safety.

Our FY ’05 funding continues our commitments to the key MCSAP initiatives:

- More than \$133.4 million for Basic MCSAP grants
- \$7.1 million for Incentive grants, providing 100-percent funding to qualifying states
- \$8.4 million for High Priority funds
- \$17 million for New Entrant grants, and
- \$2.1 million for training and administration

For Border Enforcement, we are requesting \$33 million in grants. In addition to traditional enforcement activities, this program will be used to develop necessary telecommunications and information technology systems.

These needs will be fulfilled based on specific requests, and we look forward to receiving innovative proposals for improving communications capabilities. This will enhance the ability of Border States, Federal agencies and the governments of Canada and Mexico to identify foreign carriers and drivers that have violated federal safety and security laws. The allocations between Southern and Northern Border States will be based on their specific needs.

Finally under MCSAP, CDL grants will be funded at \$22 million, and PRISM grants at \$4 million.

Another area of high priority to both the States and FMCSA is HazMat enforcement. FMCSA has an important goal of lowering the number of serious HazMat incidents by 20 percent from 2000 to 2010. We're also trying to reduce the security risks of HazMats that could potentially be used as weapons in a terrorist attack.

To achieve this, FMCSA developed a Hazardous Materials Operational Test. IACP helped prompt the test. The test was developed to quantify the costs and benefits of various security technologies and enforcement practices.

The IACP is directly involved in this effort, represented by Jack Grant. Jack is participating on an Expert Panel that is helping to guide an independent evaluation of the Test.

The Public Sector portion of the Test focuses on improving response time and the quality of information that is provided to responders. Four states are participating—New York, Illinois, California and Texas. The state police and State DOTs are involved in New York and Illinois.

The Test results are due out by September, but I understand we may see them earlier. Once we release the Field Test results, we will begin our outreach to the States to encourage voluntary implementation of technologies being tested.

One preliminary outcome is a reiteration of the need for each State to have a single point of contact for emergencies. While the technology being used can improve response times and the quality of information being provided, developing an infrastructure to determine the correct emergency contact remains a challenge. One State has 77 different emergency contact numbers.

I urge you all to work within your States to establish a single point of contact that the trucking industry can turn to during an emergency. This is necessary when the communication comes by

way of advanced technologies. But it's even more vital as we're working to advance the deployment of these technologies.

A number of technologies for identifying and tracking HazMat shipments will help provide critical information to emergency responders. These include wireless satellite or cellular communication, GPS tracking systems, and electronic manifests. Some of these technologies can assist in alerting emergency responders to an event such as a stolen vehicle. Examples are wireless and in-dash panic buttons, on-board computers that disable or reduce throttle to vehicles, and GPS-based routing and geo-fencing mapping software.

The Public Sector portion of the HazMat Test includes a "Public Sector Reporting Center" concept. This Center will integrate existing technologies, provide alerts and display information from the integrated systems. This concept will allow each jurisdiction to determine when and how it will be notified, based on the data being reported from HazMat trucks.

We're very excited about this effort at FMSCA. I think this program is a great example of how we can partner with State Police and other enforcement agencies to improve highway safety.

I want to tell you briefly about another couple of priority safety programs we're working on.

The first is safety belts. Last year we lost nearly 43,000 people on our nation's highways. More than 5,000 of them were in truck-involved crashes.

In addition to the human cost, the cost of these crashes on our overall economy and health-care system is staggering. In 2000, motor-vehicle crashes consumed \$32.6 billion in the area of medical costs.

One-third of all lives lost in traffic crashes result from people not wearing safety belts. And in 2002, over half of the 588 commercial drivers who died in crashes were unbelted. In addition, a recent study by FMCSA showed that only 48 percent of CMV drivers buckle up.

So, last December Secretary Mineta gathered with trucking leaders to launch the broadest effort this country has ever seen to get truckers to wear their safety belts. Your partnership on this issue, again, is critical. For every one percentage point increase in safety belt use, 270 lives are saved. So, we really need your help.

It's time to tell ALL drivers — passenger car or big rig — to buckle up! Every trip... every time... before the wheels roll.

Second, let me update you about the progress on the new Hours-of-Service (HOS) regulations. FMCSA and State enforcement partners like you began implementing the new rules on January 4. Commercial drivers now have a better opportunity to obtain rest and restorative sleep so they can be alert and drive safely.

The HOS rules give us the means to save hundreds of lives, protect billions in commerce, and safeguard our roads and highways for years to come. Plus, these safety improvements will save the American economy \$628 million a year.

The posture of these rules has just shifted from education to full-bore enforcement. Just yesterday FMCSA distributed a memo to our State law enforcement partners announcing the end of the 60-day discretionary enforcement period. We're now encouraging your officers to enforce the new HOS rules under normal operating conditions.

Drivers are telling us they are working to comply. We've heard thoughtful questions, and we're witnessing a sincere desire to follow the new regulations. We realize this also raises a lot of questions for the folks who have to enforce these new rules on the state level.

Many people have already gotten detailed information from our Web site— www.fmcsa.dot.gov— and I urge you to do the same if you have any questions. You'll find it's a valuable resource.

Thanks again for the opportunity to be with you today.